

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SIMONS' INTERVIEW WITH LT. COL. RASHID

REF: DACCA 2290 (NOTAL)

BEGIN TEXT

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF LEWIS SIMONS ARTICLE AS REQUESTED

REFTEL:

SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS IN BANGLADESH ARE DEEPLY SPLIT OVER IDEOLOGY, AND THE THREAT OF RENEWED VIOLENCE THERE IS GROWING RAPIDLY, ACCORDING TO AN OFFICER WHO HAS JUST RETURNED TO EXILE FROM DACCA.

THE OFFICER, LT. COL. KHANDAKAR ABDUR RASHID, A LEADER OF THE AUG. 15 COUP THAT RESULTED IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, SAID LAST NIGHT THAT THERE ARE INCREASING SIGNS OF "A FULL-SCALE REBELLION" IN THE FACTIONALIZED ARMY.

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THE RESIGNATION SATURDAY OF AIR VICE MARSHAL MOHAMMED

GHOLAM TAWAB AS ONE OF THE THREE CHIEF DEPUTY MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATORS RUNNING THE COUNTRY IS A SYMPTOM OF THE RIFT, RASHID SAID.

(AIR COMMODORE MOHAMMAD KHADEMUL BASHAR, WHO RECENTLY REPLACED TAWAB AS CHIEF OF THE BANGLADESH AIR FORCE, WAS TODAY PROMOTED TO AIR VICE MARSHAL AND APPOINTED DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE REPORTED FROM DACCA.)

RASHID, 31, SPENT 10 DAYS IN DACCA, THE CAPITAL OF THE IMPOVERISHED SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRY, TRYING TO PERSUADE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. ZIAUR RAHMAN TO ALLOW HIM AND A GROUP OF OTHER YOUNG OFFICERS RETURN TO BANGLADESH FROM THEIR EXILE IN LIBYA.

ZIA, AS HE IS KNOWN, REFUSED AND ORDERED RASHID AND MAJ. SHARIFUL HAQ, WHO ALSO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN LAST AUGUST'S COUP, TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY. HAQ WENT TO LONDON AND RASHID IS ON HIS WAY TO LIBYA VIA THAILAND.

BUT ANOTHER OFFICER WHO RETURNED TO BANGLADESH LAST MONTH, ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS RASHID AND HAQ, LT. COL. SYED FAROOK RAHMAN, MANAGED TO EVADE ZIA AND IS NOW BELIEVED TO BE OUTSIDE DACCA AT BOGRA WITH HIS TANK REGIMENT, THE 1ST BENGAL LANCERS.

"IF ZIA ORDERS FAROOK TO LEAVE AS HE DID ME," RASHID SAID, "FAROOK WILL CHALLENGE HIM. THEN HOW ZIA RESPONDS TO THAT CHALLENGE WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THERE WILL BE A FULL-SCALE REBELLION."

RASHID, WHO MET WITH ZIA, TAWAB, ADM. M.H. KHAN AND THE REST OF THE TOP MILITARY COMMAND IN BANGLADESH, SAID THAT WHEN HE LEFT DACCA FRIDAY NIGHT HE WAS NOT AWARE THAT TAWAB WAS RESIGNING, BUT ADDED THAT THE MOVE DOES NOT SURPRISE HIM.

"THERE WAS A GROWING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ZIA AND TAWAB," HE SAID. "TAWAB WANTED TO HAVE BANGLADESH DECLARED AN UNCLASSIFIED

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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC AND UNITE FIRMLY WITH OTHER ISLAMIC STATES FOR FINANCIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT"-AN ANTI-INDIAN MOVE.

ZIA WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THIS, RASHID SAID, ADDING THAT ZIA IS GRADUALLY DROPPING THE ANTI-INDIAN POSTURE WITH WHICH HE TOOK CONTROL OF BANGLADESH FOLLOWING A BLOODY ARMED MUTINY IN DACCA NOV. 7.

TAWAB, 46, A FIGHTER PILOT WHO RETURNED TO BANGLADESH ONLY LAST OCTOBER AFTER LIVING IN WEST GERMANY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, WAS KNOWN AS RABIDLY ANTI-INDIAN.

RASHID SAID THAT AT ONE POINT DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH ZIA, THE GENERAL TOLD HIM THAT BANGLADESH COULD NOT SURVIVE IF IT CONTINUED TO BE ANTI-INDIAN. END TEXT.
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